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SIPDIS

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NEA/ELA, WHA/CCA

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TAGS: ETRD ETTC PREL CU SY

SUBJECT: SYRIA-CUBA: TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD ACT,
DECEMBER 2007

REF: A. SECSTATE 158768

¶B. DAMASCUS 483

Classified By: A/DCM Todd Holmstrom for reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Per ref A, the most recent official information available from the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics states that in 2006, Cuban imports to Syria totaled USD 27,000 and Syrian exports to Cuba reached USD 1.2 million. These totals represent over a tenfold increase in Syrian exports to Cuba from end-of-year 2005 data (USD 106,978), but a significant decrease in Cuban exports to Syria over the same period(USD 160,834).

¶2. (C) Three high-level Cuban delegations visited Syria in the spring of 2007 (see ref B). In June 2007, the Cuban Ambassador to Damascus met with the Syrian Minister of Agriculture to reiterate Cuba's interest in a joint-venture to produce veterinary vaccines. However, no subsequent details about this project have been reported.

¶3. (C) The Director of International Relations at the Syrian Ministry of Economy and Trade told EconFSN that the only agreement in effect with Cuba is a pro forma "trade agreement" from 1998, ratified in 2000, that Syria signs with all "friendly" countries. The agreement gives no reduced customs or other preferential access to either market, but is an expression of the SARG's intent to increase and encourage trade with Cuba, according to the SARG official.

¶4. (C) Post is unaware of any exchange programs between the two countries. There are no policies or actions taken by the SARG to advance democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba.

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